

## CHAPTER XXI

### *The Most High Commands Most Holy Mary to Enter the State of Matrimony, and Her Response to This Command.*

739. At the age of thirteen and a half years, having grown considerably for her age, our most charming Princess, most pure Mary, had another abstractive vision of the Divinity of the same order and kind as those already described. In this vision, we might say, happened something similar to that which Holy Scriptures says of Abraham when God commanded him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, the only pledge of all his hopes. God tried Abraham, says Moses (Gen. 12:1-2), probing and examining his promptness in obedience in order to reward it. We can say the same thing of our great Lady, that God tried Her in this vision by commanding Her to enter the state of matrimony. From this we can also understand the truth of the words: *How incomprehensible are the judgments of the Lord* (Rom. 11:33), and how exalted are his ways and thoughts above our own! As distant as heaven is from earth were the thoughts of most holy Mary from the plans which the Most High now made known to Her by commanding Her to accept a husband for her protection and company, for as far as depended upon her will She had desired and resolved during all her life not to have a husband (433, 586), repeating and renewing the vow of chastity which She had made so early in her life.

740. As already mentioned, the Lord had celebrated his solemn espousal with the heavenly Princess Mary when She was brought to the temple (435), confirming and approving her vow of chastity, and solemnizing it by the presence of the glorious hosts of angels. The most innocent Dove had withdrawn Herself from all human interaction, relinquishing entirely all that could be called worldly interest and attention, or love and desire of creatures. She was altogether taken up and transformed by the pure and chaste love of that highest Good which never fails, knowing She would be more chaste by loving Him, more pure by touching Him, and more virginal by receiving Him. When therefore without any other explanation the command of the Lord reached Her that She now accept an earthly spouse and husband, what surprise and astonishment was it to this heavenly Maiden, who in her fixed confidence was living so secure in the possession of God himself as her Spouse, to now hear from Him such a command? Greater was this trial than that of Abraham (Gen. 22), for he did not love Isaac in the same degree as most holy Mary loved inviolate chastity.

741. Nevertheless, at this unexpected command the most prudent Virgin suspended her judgment and preserved the calmness of her hope and belief more perfectly than Abraham. Hoping against hope (Rom. 4:18), She made answer to the Lord saying: "Eternal God of incomprehensible Majesty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things contained therein, who weighest the winds (Job 28:25), and by thy commands settest bounds to the sea, and all creation is subject to thy will: Thou, O Lord, canst do with this vile wormlet according to thy pleasure, without my failure in what I have promised to Thee. And in order not to stray from what pleases Thee, my Good and my Lord, anew I confirm and ratify that I desire to be chaste for the rest of my life, and I desire Thee for my Master and Spouse; yet since my only duty as thy creature is to obey Thee, I beg of Thee, my Spouse, to hasten to rescue me from my human weakness in this undertaking in which thy holy love places me." Regarding the inferior part of her nature the most chaste maiden Mary was somewhat troubled, as happened afterwards at the message of the archangel Gabriel (Lk. 1:29); and though She felt some sadness, yet it did not hinder Her from the most heroic obedience which until then She had practiced, and She resigned Herself entirely

into the hands of the Lord. His Majesty answered Her: "Mary, let not thy Heart be disturbed, for thy resignation is acceptable to Me, and my powerful arm is not subject to laws; on my part I shall hasten to provide what is most proper for Thee."

742. Consoled only by this vague promise of the Lord, most holy Mary recovered from her vision and returned to her ordinary state. Left between doubt and hope by the divine command and promise She was full of solicitude, for the Lord intended for Her to multiply her tearful sentiments of love and confidence, of faith, humility, obedience, most pure chastity, and of other virtues impossible to enumerate. In the meanwhile, while our great Lady applied Herself to vigilant prayer and to her resigned and prudent sighs and solicitude, God spoke in sleep to the high priest, St. Simeon, and commanded him to arrange for the marriage of Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anne of Nazareth, since He regarded Her with special care and love. The holy priest answered, asking what was his will in regard to the person whom the maiden Mary was to marry and to whom She was to give Herself as spouse. The Lord instructed him to call together the other priests and learned persons and tell them that this Maiden was left alone and an orphan, and that She did not desire to be married; but since it was a custom for the firstborn maidens not to leave the temple without being provided for, it was proper for Her to be married to whomsoever it seemed good to them.

743. The high priest obeyed the divine order, and having called together the other priests he made known to them the will of the Most High, informing them of the favor in which His Majesty held this Maiden, Mary of Nazareth, as had been revealed to him. He told them that since She was an inhabitant of the temple and was now without parents, it was their duty to provide for Her and find a husband worthy of a Maiden so modest, virtuous, and of such unimpeachable conduct as was hers in the temple; moreover, since Mary was of noble lineage, and her property and other considerations made this marriage particularly important, it was necessary to consider well to whom She was to be entrusted. He added also that Mary of Nazareth did not desire to be married, yet at the same time it would not be proper to dismiss Her from the temple unmarried, since She was an orphan and a firstborn daughter.

744. Having conferred about this matter among themselves the priests and learned men, moved by divine impulse, concluded that in a matter where so much was involved, and where the Lord himself had favorably intervened, it would be best to inquire further into his holy will and ask Him to designate in some manner who would be the most appropriate person to be the spouse of Mary. Knowing her spouse must be of the house and of the race of David in order to comply with the law, they appointed a day on which all the free and unmarried men of that race who were then in Jerusalem were to be called together in the temple; this happened to be the very day on which our Princess completed her fourteenth year. Since it was necessary to notify Her of the result of their conference and ask her consent, the high priest Simeon called Her and informed Her of their intention to give Her a spouse before dismissing Her from the temple.

745. The most prudent Virgin, with a countenance betokening virginal modesty, answered the priest with great composure and humility: "My master, as far as my will is concerned I have desired to preserve perpetual chastity during all my life, dedicating myself to my God in the service of this holy temple in return for the great blessings which I have received in it. I have never had the intention or inclination to enter the state of matrimony, since I consider myself unsuitable for the cares brought with it. This is my inclination, yet thou, my master, who takest the place of God, shalt teach me what is according to his holy will." The priest answered: "My daughter, thy holy desires are acceptable to the Lord; yet take notice that no maiden of Israel abstains from marriage while we await the coming of the Messiah submissive to the divine

prophecies. Hence all who obtain issue of children among our people judge themselves happy and blessed. In the state of matrimony Thou canst serve God truly and with much perfection, and so Thou mayest obtain a companion conformable to thy intentions let us pray, beseeching the Lord (since He has spoken) to choose by his hand a spouse for Thee among those of the line of David who shall be most conformable to the divine will. Do Thou beseech this with continual prayer so the Most High look upon Thee and direct us in all things.”

746. This happened nine days before the one appointed for the execution and realization of their resolve. During this time the most holy Virgin multiplied her prayers, beseeching the Lord with incessant tears and sighs to fulfill his divine pleasure in that which She had so much at heart. On one of those nine days the Lord appeared to Her and said to Her: “My Spouse and my Dove, let thy afflicted Heart be dilated, and let it not be disturbed or sad. I am attentive to thy desires and pleadings; I shall entirely govern this event, and by my light shall rule the priest. I shall give Thee a spouse selected by Myself, who shall not impede thy holy desires, but rather with my grace shall help Thee in them. I shall find for Thee a perfect man according to my Heart, and I shall choose him from among my servants. My power is infinite, and my protection and aid shall not fail Thee.”

747. Most holy Mary responded and said to the Lord: “Highest Good and Love of my soul, Thou well knowest the secret of my bosom and the desires which Thou hast deposited in it from the instant I received my entire being from Thee; preserve me then, my Spouse, chaste and pure as I have desired by Thee thyself and for Thee. Despise not my sighs, and turn not thy divine face from me. Take notice, my Lord and Master, that I am a vile wormlet, weak and contemptible due to my abjection, and if in the state of matrimony I fall away from virtue I shall disappoint Thee and my desires. Make my security certain, and be not disobliged because I have not merited this. Though I am but useless dust (Gen. 18:27) I shall clamor at the feet of thy greatness, hoping in thy infinite mercies.”

748. The most chaste Maiden also approached her holy Angels, whom She surpassed in sanctity and purity, and conferred with them many times regarding the concern of her Heart over the new state expected of Her. One day the holy spirits said to Her: “Spouse of the Most High, since Thou canst not ignore or forget this title, nor much less the love He who is almighty and true has for Thee, let thy Heart be calm, O Lady, since heaven and earth will sooner fail than the truth and fulfillment of his promises (Mt. 24:35). By the disposition of thy Spouse the events of thy life course on, and his powerful arm which reigns over the elements and all creatures can suspend the force of the impetuous waves, and impede the vehemence of their operations so neither fire will burn\* nor the earth show its weight. His high judgments are hidden and holy, his decrees most just and admirable, and creatures cannot comprehend them, though they must revere them. If in his grandeur He desires Thee to serve Him in matrimony, it shall be better for Thee to please Him therein than to displease Him in some other state of life. Without doubt His Majesty shall do with Thee what is best and most holy and perfect; be secure in his promises.” By this angelic exhortation the concerns of our Princess were somewhat calmed. She asked them anew to assist and protect Her, and to present to the Lord her submission while She awaited that which his divine pleasure would ordain in her regard.

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\* cf. Ex. 3:2 [Ed.]

*INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN.*

749. My dearest daughter, most exalted and venerable are the judgments of the Lord, and they must not be scrutinized by mortals since they are impenetrable. His Highness commanded me to take on the state of matrimony, and then concealed from me the sacramental mystery; yet it was proper I enter this state so my parturition would be honorable to the world, reputed the incarnate Word in my womb as the son of my spouse, though at the same time remaining ignorant of the mystery. It was also an opportune means to conceal it from Lucifer and his demons, who were so ruthless against me, seeking to execute their indignant rage upon me. When Lucifer saw me enter the common state of other married women he was blinded in believing it was incompatible for her to have a husband and yet be the Mother of God himself; by this he was somewhat assuaged, and made a truce with his malice. The Most High also had other ends in view for me in the married state which have become manifest, though at that time they were hidden to me since that was proper.

750. I desire thee to understand, my daughter, that knowing I was to have any man as my spouse, without the Lord declaring to me the mystery, was for me the greatest sorrow and affliction I had ever suffered until that day; and if in this pain the divine power had not comforted me and given me a certain confidence, though obscure and indeterminate, I would have lost my life in this sorrow. Yet from this event thou canst learn how complete must be the resignation of the creature to the will of the Most High, and how it must restrain its curtailed understanding, without scrutinizing such exalted and hidden secrets of His Majesty. And when to the creature any difficulty or risk presents itself in what the Lord disposes or commands, let him trust in the Lord and believe he was not placed therein in order to be forsaken, but rather to be drawn forth victorious and triumphant if on his part he cooperates with the assistance of the Lord himself. Whenever a soul desires to scrutinize the judgments of his wisdom, and satisfy himself before he obeys and believes, let him know he defrauds the Creator of his glory and grandeur, and at the same time loses his own merit.

751. I recognized that the Most High is superior to all creatures and has no need of our foresight, for He seeks only the subjection of our will, since the creature cannot give Him counsel,\* but only obedience and praise. And although by not knowing what He would command and ordain for me in the state of matrimony I was much afflicted due to my love for chastity, yet this sorrow and pain did not make me curious and scrutinous, but served to make my obedience more excellent and pleasing in his eyes. By this example thou must regulate the subjection thou must have to all thou dost understand to be according to the pleasure of thy Spouse and Lord, resigning thyself to his protection and confiding in the firmness of his infallible promises. And whenever thou hast the approbation of thy priests and prelates, allow thyself to be governed without any resistance to their commands or to the divine inspirations.

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\* cf. Rom. 11:34 [Ed.]